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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CAN, OES/OA AND OES/OMC
NOAA FOR NATIONAL OCEANS SERVICE:KITSOS
NOAA ALSO FOR NMFS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS:WARE-HARRIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: VISIT TO OTTAWA OF CHAIRMAN OF U.S. COMMISSION ON
OCEAN POLICY

REF: OTTAWA 983

1. This is an action message. Please see paragraph 8.

2. Summary: Admiral James D. Watkins (ret.), former Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, visited Ottawa April 12 to brief senior Canadian officials on the Commission's final report. GOC officials reviewed the status of Canada's Ocean Action Plan (OAP), and expressed their desire to hold government-to-government talks on oceans policy in the near future. Comparison of the Commission's report and Canada's OAP suggest that there are a number of important areas for potential collaboration, including science and technology, the Arctic, and coordinated ecosystem management. Admiral Watkins also discussed the Oceans Commission report with a reporter from the Globe and Mail newspaper, and met with key members of Parliament's Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. End summary.

3. Discussions on ocean policy began with a meeting at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), attended by representatives of nine Canadian agencies, including the Deputy Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans, Indian and Northern Affairs, and National Defense, as well as the commander of the Canadian Navy. Admiral Watkins, accompanied by former Commission Executive Director Dr. Thomas Kitsos and staff members of the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education, briefed the GOC officials on the Commission's report, emphasizing the Commission's finding on the need for a more formalized structure to enhance interagency cooperation within the USG. Admiral Watkins also highlighted four potential areas for enhanced U.S.-Canada collaboration: science and technology, the Arctic, the Great Lakes, and international capacity building.

4. DFO Deputy Minister Larry Murray followed with a presentation on Canada's Ocean Action Plan, noting that it corresponds in key areas with the U.S. Commission report. Murray emphasized that the Ocean Action Plan urges an ecosystem-based approach to oceans management, and highlighted existing Canada-U.S. collaboration both bilaterally on the Gulf of Maine Council, and multilaterally in bodies such as the Global Oceans Forum, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, and the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan. Murray also suggested that the United States and Canada could work together to place integrated oceans management issues on the agendas of international organizations and conferences such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the G-8, and the Davos Forum.

5. According to GOC officials, Canada's Ocean Action Plan rests on four interconnected pillars that will serve to integrate GOC policy: International Leadership, Integrated Oceans Management, Health of the Oceans, and Science and Technology. Murray noted that the GOC has already undertaken to buttress the first pillar, International Leadership, with the May 1-5 High Seas Fisheries Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland. Regarding Integrated Oceans Management, Canada has created five "Large Ocean Management Areas" on all three of its coasts (including the Arctic) to analyze the health of the marine ecosystems and establish more effective ecosystem management. The third pillar, Health of the Oceans, includes designation of Marine Protected Areas and development of ballast water and marine pollution regulations. The final pillar, Science and Technology, encompasses GOC-sponsored research on seabed mapping, ecosystem overviews in support of integrated management, and technology development and demonstration.

6. DFO Minister Geoff Regan hosted a luncheon for Admiral Watkins, also attended by Member of Parliament Shawn Murphy, who serves as Parliamentary Secretary for DFO. Admiral Watkins reviewed the main points of the Commission Report for Regan, who appeared well briefed and noted the important similarities in the U.S. and Canadian approaches to oceans management. Regan agreed on the importance of government-to-government consultations, and expressed appreciation that oceans management was specifically included in the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) agenda agreed to at the March 23 summit among President Bush, Prime

Minister Martin, and President Fox. Several GOC officials expressed a preference that oceans policy talks be conducted on a bilateral basis, explaining that because Canada and Mexico do not share any marine ecosystems, they would prefer to engage Mexico on oceans policy in multilateral fora.

17. Admiral Watkins had a brief interview with the science reporter from the Globe and Mail newspaper, and then met with key members of Parliament's Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, including Chairman Tom Wappel, Conservative Party Fisheries Critic Loyola Hearn, New Democratic Fisheries Critic Peter Stoffer, and Parliamentary Secretary Shawn Murphy. The members showed considerable interest in the Commission's report, and required an extension of the time originally set for the meeting.

18. Comment and action request: GOC officials expressed great appreciation for the opportunity to be briefed on the Oceans Commission report, and were particularly pleased that the ecosystem-based management approach advocated in the report is clearly compatible with Canada's Ocean Action Plan. The GOC is ready to move to government-to-government meetings on oceans policy, either in Ottawa or Washington, and would like to do so in the near future, in part to build upon the attention oceans policy received in the SPP. Embassy would appreciate input from Washington agencies on how best to move ahead with this process.

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